

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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INFO AMCONSUL NAHA

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS MARR, JA
SUBJ: PROPOSED MOVE OF HQS ELEMENTS OF 1ST MAW TO OKINAWA

FOR: EA/J - SHERMAN

1. COMMANDANT MARINE CORPS HAS INFORMED CINCPAC, AND CINCPAC IN TURN HAS INFORMED COMUSJAPAN, OF DESIRE TO MOVE HQS ELEMENTS OF 1ST MARINE AIR WING (MAW) FROM IWAKUNI MCAS TO OKINAWA. PLAN ENVISAGES MOVING MAW CG AND HEADQUARTERS, WITH APPROXIMATELY 1200 PERSONNEL, TO FACILITIES AT SUKERAN IN OKINAWA, WHICH ARMY IS VACATING, AND EIGHT SUPPORT AIRCRAFT (C-117'S) TO FUTEMMA MCAS. MOVE WOULD RESULT IN HQS III MARINE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE (MAF) AND HQS 1ST MAW BEING CO-LOCATED IN PROXIMITY OF 3RD MARDIV, A PATTERN OF COMMAND COORDINATION OF MARINE AIR-GROUND TEAM CONCEPT FOUND EFFECTIVE OVER NUMBER OF YEARS IN USMC BASING ARRANGEMENTS IN U.S. MOVE WOULD RESULT IN 1ST MAW BEING APPROXIMATELY EVENLY SPLIT BETWEEN IWAKUNI AND OKINAWA, WITH TWO AIR GROUPS (TACTICAL AIRCRAFT) REMAINING AT IWAKUNI UNDER DEPUTY WING CDR AND WING HEADQUARTERS ELEMENTS, AIR CONTROL UNIT, AND ONE AIR GROUP (HELICOPTERS) LOCATED IN OKINAWA. OKINAWA BASING ENVISAGES USING FUTEMMA FOR OPERATIONS OF EIGHT SUPPORT AIRCRAFT, TEMPORARILY (POSSIBLY TWO-THREE YEARS) RELOCATING SOME HELICOPTERS TO EX-ARMY AIRFIELD AT HANBY. OTHER MARINE FLYING OPERATIONS IN OKINAWA, SUCH AS USE OF TRAINING AREAS BY ROTATIONAL SQUADRON FLYING OUT OF KADENA (FORMERLY OUT OF NAHA AB), WILL BE UNCHANGED.

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USFJ BELIEVES PROPOSED MOVE WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON OKINAWA BASE CONSOLIDATION PLAN (OBCEP), BUT MAY REDUCE JAPANESE REPLACEMENT CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS AT IWAKUNI UNDER JFAP. 1ST MAW MOVE IS CONTEMPLATED TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN PERIOD AUGUST 1975-JANUARY 1976.

2. IN RESPONSE TO INFORMAL REQUEST FOR VIEWS BY USFJ, EMBASSY ENUMERATED SEVERAL POINTS ON WHICH FURTHER INFORMATION WOULD BE DESIRABLE AS BASIS FOR ASSESSING POTENTIAL PROBLEMS, IF ANY, THAT MAY BE RAISED BY PROPOSED 1ST MAW HQS SHIFT. FOR EXPLANATION TO GOJ, WE ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON BASIC RATIONALE FOR MOVE, ADVANTAGES OF CO-LOCATION OVER PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS. WE ALSO ASKED WHETHER MARINE FLYING ACTIVITIES AT FUTEMMA MCAS WOULD BE AFFECTED BY NEW INTRODUCTION OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE OR OTHER FIXED-WING COMBAT AIRCRAFT. WE DISCUSSED PROBABILITY OF LOCAL OKINAWAN REACTION AGAINST APPARENT "BUILD-UP" OF MARINES ON OKINAWA BY TRANSFER OF MAJOR FLAG AND 1200 PERSONNEL, PLUS SOME ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT.

3. FINALLY, EMBASSY ALSO ASKED WHETHER PROPOSED MOVE SHOULD BE VIEWED AS PART OF INCREMENTAL MOVE OF OPERATIONAL FORCES OF 1ST MAW TO OKINAWA. WE NOTED THAT UNLESS MAW WERE TO SUPPLANT AIR FORCE ELEMENTS AT KADENA TO MAKE ABSORPTION OF MAW AT KADENA FEASIBLE, ANY PLAN TO PUT ENTIRE AIR-GROUND TEAM TOGETHER IN OKINAWA APPEARS LIKELY TO OFFER SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH GOJ. LOCAL ATTITUDES, LOCATION OF FUTEMMA IN DENSELY POPULATED PART OF OKINAWA, AND LIMITED AREA OF BASE MAKE PERMANENT OPERATIONAL USE OF BASE BY COMBAT ELEMENTS OF MAW, BEYOND HELICOPTERS AND SUPPORT AIRCRAFT PRESENTLY USING IT, A HIGHLY DOUBTFUL PROPOSITION. WE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED INFORMAL ASSURANCES FROM USFJ THAT PROPOSED 1ST MAW HEADQUARTERS MOVE IS NOT RPT NOT PART OF SUCH INCREMENTAL PLAN.

4. EMBASSY'S INFORMAL ORAL COMMENTS HAVE BEEN RELAYED TO CINCPAC AND JCS. WE EXPECT REPLIES TO OUR SEVERAL QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLY A REQUIREMENT FOR AN EMBASSY VIEW ON-THE-RECORD AS TO FEASIBILITY OF PLAN FROM POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW BEFORE DECISION IS TAKEN. WE UNDERSTAND DOD MAY ALSO BE CONSULTING WITH STATE CONCERNING THIS PROPOSAL IN THE MEANTIME. IT APPEARS TO US LIKELY THAT WE WILL CONCLUDE, BASED ON FURTHER INFORMATION WE HAVE REQUESTED, THAT WE SHOULD APPROACH GOJ TO INFORM THEM OF THE PLAN AND EXPLAIN ITS BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS FOR BASE PRESENCE IN OKINAWA (AND RELEVANCE FOR OBCP AND JFAP). IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PROCESS OF EXPLANATION WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN
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BY SEPTEMBER 1, WHEN USMC WISHES TO COMMENCE.

5. WE ALSO FLAGGED TO USFJ OUR TOP-OF-THE-HEAD HUNCH THAT 1ST MAW USE OF HANBY AIRFIELD MAY CAUSE ADVERSE REACTION ON JAPANESE SIDE. HANBY IS ONE OF THE PARCELS OF LAND WHICH HAVE BEEN EYED FOR SOME TIME BY JAPANESE, UNDER INTENSIVE LOBBYING EFFORT BY CHATAN VILLAGE AUTHORITIES COMMENCING IN 1972 WHICH ENGAGED INTEREST OF CONSDR-VATIVE DIET MEMBERS FROM OKINAWA AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. HANBY, ALONG WITH ARMY PISTOL PRACTICE RANGE AND LAND AROUND ARMY HOSPITAL AT KUE, CAMPS MERCY AND BOONE, AND OTHER U.S. FACILITIES, LIES IMMEDIATELY ALONG HIGHWAY 58 AND IS HIGHLY VISIBLE FACILITY. CHATAN VILLAGERS WERE ALSO CONCERNED IN 1972-73 TO PROTECT THEIR USE OF SMALL BOAT BASIN ON SEAWARD SIDE OF HANBY. HANBY IS ONE OF

THE FACILITIES IN WHICH FORMER DEFMIN YAMANAKA HAS MAINTAINED PERSONAL INTEREST, ALTHOUGH RECENT ECONOMIC TRENDS HAVE DIMINISHED LOCAL PRESSURE FROM LOCAL INTERESTS FOR RETURN OF LAND. ALL OF WHICH IS NOT TO SAY IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONVERT AIRFIELD TO MARINE USE FOR TEMPORARY PERIOD IF NEEDED; IT SEEMS LIKELY, HOWEVER, TO BE ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF TOTAL MARINE PROPOSAL THAT MAY ENGAGE US IN DISCUSSION WITH GOJ.

6. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE ON RESPONSE TO USFJ'S EXPECTED REQUEST FOR FORMAL EMBASSY INPUT. WE ALSO WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT REPORTING ON STATUS OF CONSIDERATION OF THIS MATTER IN WASHINGTON AS IT PROGRESSES.
SHOESMITH

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